



The main focus of our work parties this month has been laying out the sleepers to get them ready for the insertion of the rails. Our first picture shows the starting point with the sleepers laid out 'as delivered'.



Despite being a little short of manpower due to the Easter Holidays, our small team managed to get most of the sleepers lined up and the area for the rail joints levelled and ballasted.



Moving heavy concrete sleepers by hand was no easy task but by the middle of April a fairly straight line was beginning to emerge. We will bring in some lifting gear next month to manoeuvre the rails into place.



In other news, our Membership continues to grow and currently stands at 221. This has been helped by some positive publicity recently including an article in the 'Guildford Voice' which is delivered free to 10,000 households within a 5 mile radius of our site at the Mizens Railway. The number of hits on our website has risen to almost 21,000 and we now have 870 friends on Facebook !



Following a serious incident on March 7th when a steam special passed a signal at danger, Network Rail has served West Coast Railways with a suspension notice effective from midnight on April 3. This is a serious blow to the UK main line steam market as WCRC operate more than 90% of the steam locos currently running on Network Rail.

It is believed that a 100mph collision between a First Great Western High Speed Train and the steam excursion operated by WCR was missed by barely a minute. The SPAD ranked as the most serious this year and has resulted in this unprecedented suspension. Operators have been banned from certain routes, but this is the first total network ban since privatisation, indicating the gravity with which Network Rail is treating the incident, West Coast Railways has been given until May 15 to take the required steps to remedy the “Event of Default” which has occurred because of a breach in Safety Obligations, or the likelihood that one will occur. Further details can be found on : <http://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/statement-west-coast-railways-suspension-notice>

One of the last steam specials to run before the ban came into force, was the ‘Steam Dreams’ tour from Oxford to Kingswear. NBL B1 Class 4-6-0 No. 61306 ‘Mayflower’ is seen leaving Aldermaston on this train on Sunday 1st April.

I’m sure we all hope that the issues between West Coast and Network Rail can be resolved soon so steam passengers travel arrangements can be confirmed and sights like this can be enjoyed again soon.

**Thank you all once again for your continued support
More news to follow next month, Best Regards, Ken**